IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 23. Pending and allowed claims 1-22 follow.

1. (Previously Amended) A method for making a fresh cheese comprising:

pasteurizing and acidifying one or more dairy components to obtain a cheese dairy product;

coagulating the cheese dairy product to form a coagulum comprising curd and whey;

cutting the coagulum and removing the whey thereby leaving the curd;

heating the curd using steam and kneading the curd to produce a fiberous mass;

the coagulating, cutting, heating and kneading steps being performed without intermediate freezing, cold storage or packing;

before or during heating, adding to the curd or to the fiberous mass an extender, the extender comprising at least one source of fat;

cutting the fiberous mass into sections;

cooling the fiberous mass sections in brine; and

processing the cooled fiberous mass sections to produce a cheese product.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one source of fat is present in the extender in an amount of at least about 0.5 wt.%.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one source of fat is present in the extender in an amount ranging from about 0.5 wt.% to about 30 wt.%.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one source of fat is selected from the group consisting of butter, plastic cream, plastic fat, anhydrous milk fat, cream, whey cream, vegetable fat, and animal fat.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the extender further comprises one or more low cost solids.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the low cost solids are selected from the group consisting of starch, maltodextrin, and nonfat milk solids.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the extender further comprises water.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, heating further comprising heating the curd comprising heating the curd with a closed system processor.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, the viscosity of the extender being approximately the same as a viscosity of the curd during heating.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising extruding the fiberous mass as a continuous rope, wherein cutting the fiberous mass into sections comprises cutting the extruded continuous rope into sections.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10, extruding comprising extruding a fiberous mass having a unidirectional protein structure orientation.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, further comprising cutting the cheese product parallel to the direction of the protein structure.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising feeding the fiberous mass through a water bath prior to cutting the fiberous mass into sections and cooling the fiberous mass sections in brine.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, feeding comprising feeding the fiberous mass through a water bath so that the fiberous mass is cooled to a temperature of about 110-150°F.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, cooling the fiberous mass sections in brine comprising cooling the fiberous mass sections in brine having a temperature of about 20-30°F.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, cooling the fiberous mass sections in brine comprising cooling the fiberous mass sections in brine for about 15-90 minutes.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, the fiberous mass sections being soaked in the brine until the fiberous mass sections are cooled to a temperature of about 36 to 45°F.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, processing the cooled fiberous mass sections to produce a cheese product comprising

removing the cooled fiberous mass sections from the brine; and

rinsing the fiberous mass sections.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, the cheese product having a melting point of about 10 days.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, the cheese product having a shelf life about 60-90 days.

21. (Previously Presented) A method of making cheese, comprising:

pasteurizing and acidifying one or more dairy components to obtain a cheese dairy product;

coagulating the cheese dairy product to form a coagulum comprising curd and whey;

cutting the coagulum and removing the whey thereby leaving the curd;

heating the curd using steam and kneading the curd to produce a fiberous mass;

the coagulating, cutting, heating and kneading steps being performed without intermediate freezing, cold storage or packing;

before or during heating, adding to the curd or to the fiberous mass an extender, the extender comprising at least one source of fat;

extruding the fiberous mass as a continuous rope;

cutting the continuous rope into fiberous mass sections;

cooling the fiberous mass sections in brine; and

processing the cooled fiberous mass sections to produce a cheese product.

22. (Previously Presented) A method of making cheese, comprising:

pasteurizing and acidifying one or more dairy components to obtain a cheese dairy product;

coagulating the cheese dairy product to form a coagulum comprising curd and whey;

cutting the coagulum and removing the whey thereby leaving the curd;

heating the curd using steam and kneading the curd to produce a fiberous mass;

the coagulating, cutting, heating and kneading steps being performed without intermediate freezing, cold storage or packing;

before or during heating, adding to the curd or to the fiberous mass an extender, the extender comprising at least one source of fat;

extruding the fiberous mass as a continuous rope having a unidirectional protein structure orientation;

cutting the continuous rope into fiberous mass sections;

cooling the fiberous mass sections in brine;

processing the cooled fiberous mass sections to produce a cheese product;

aligning a blade of a cutting mechanism with the direction of the protein structure of the fiberous mass; and

cutting the cheese product parallel to the direction of the protein structure.

23. (Canceled)